

Amendments to the Specification

Please replace the second paragraph of page 5 (beginning at line 10) with the following paragraph:

In operation, during a surgical wound drainage procedure, the system monitors fluid collected from the patient and the controller saves the collection information in a historical record. The historical data information is used by the controller for several purposes. First, the controller uses the historical data to create a record that may be presented on the visual display so that the care provider can quickly determine the progress of patient recovery and surgical wound healing based on the amount of liquid collected from the surgical site over time. For example, a graphical representation of how much liquid that has been collected over a period of several finite time intervals may be displayed graphically on the visual display, such as in a bar graph.

Please replace the first full paragraph of page 9 (beginning at line 10) with the following paragraph:

FIG. 1 shows a diagrammatical illustration of a postoperative fluid monitoring and alert system 10 in combination with a fluid collection device 12. The monitoring and alert system 10 may be mounted together with the collection device 12, such as on an I.V. pole 14, and connected together by a communication conduit 16 such as wiring. The fluid collection device 12 is joined to a surgical wound drain tube 18 that leads to a drain catheter (not shown) positioned internally at the surgical site of a patient 20.

Please replace the first full paragraph of page 10 (beginning at line 1) with the following paragraph:

It is noted that suction applied to the surgical site also serves to remove trapped air, which is desirable to reduce patient discomfort and to help organs return to their

original pre-procedure state and position. However in monitoring the progress of patient recovery and wound healing, it is more important (and reliable) to focus attention on the amount of liquid recovered from the surgical site. The system of the present invention monitors a surgical wound fluid drainage procedure by observing the amount of liquid collected during the process. A properly operating fluid drainage process as determined by monitoring the liquid collected will inevitably serve to drain ~~aspirate~~ all undesirable fluids from the surgical site including gas such as air.

Please replace the third full paragraph of page 10 (beginning at line 18) with the following paragraph:

The monitoring and alert system 10 comprises a controller 24 configured to be programmed with a computer readable medium. The controller is contained within a housing that may be securable adjacent to a connected fluid collection device such as being mountable on an I.V. pole that is shared with the collection device. The housing may also include a visual display 26 and user ~~input~~ input controls 28 that are connected to the controller. The controller is connected to one or more sensors and fluid controls mounted in the fluid collection device. The communication conduit 16 may comprise a bundle of wires each of which establishes a direct connection between a sensor and a receptacle on the controller. An example of controller suitable for use in the present invention is the Phillips 1L 80C32 controller.

Please replace the third paragraph of page 12 (beginning at line 22) with the following paragraph.

Referring to Figs. 3 and 4, the optical observing means of the liquid collection sensor comprises camera (not shown) mounted inside the fluid collection device housing 34. The camera observes liquid level 32 of liquid contained in the collection vessel 22. A slot 30 through the housing 34 of the fluid collection device 12 provides a viewing port through which the camera can visually observe the surface level 32 of

liquid collected in the collection vessel 20. When the collection vessel 22 is mounted to the side of the fluid collection device 12, the slot 30 aligns with a vertical column 38 that is housed in the vessel 20 and in fluid communication with its interior. A floating ball 36 is provided in the column that floats on the surface of the liquid surface level 32 while remaining constrained in the area of the vertical column. The ball enhances the visibility of liquid surface level 32 for the camera thereby providing the optical observing means component of the liquid collection sensor. Though the ball helps the camera distinguish where the liquid level begins, the camera views the entire column and detects area in the column not occupied by liquid as explained below.